The Way to a True End-to-End Social Media-Centric Enterprise

To ride the social media wave and cash in on emerging opportunities across the organization, enterprises need to establish the processes, frameworks and workflows on which social drives business transformation.
Executive Summary

“If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell six friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000.” — JEFF BEZOS, AMAZON FOUNDER/CEO

As obvious as it sounds, this statement captures the raw power and influence of social media. No wonder, then, that organizations across industries are trying to stake their claim in the social realm and develop a deep dialog with their customers. However, companies appear to be perplexed by the plethora of social media networks that emerge seemingly every month, offering new and ingenious ways for consumers to interact with brands.

Consumers, employees and competitors are the three forces in the emerging triumvirate that is influencing enterprise social activities and compelling companies to integrate social media across various functions of the organization.

In their eagerness to ride each ensuing social media wave, most organizations are struggling to move their social media efforts beyond the marketing function, to become a true end-to-end social media-centric enterprise. But unless they plan, prepare and embed the right processes and frameworks, they are bound to encounter operational risks, regulatory challenges and security threats on their journey.

This white paper covers the keys steps that an organization must consider to overcome the hurdles of becoming a true end-to-end social media-centric enterprise. It offers insights into how social media can deliver business efficiencies and competitive advantage when it is effectively integrated into the business. This transition typically occurs in three stages:

- **Assessment**: Conducting an organizational social media maturity analysis that gauges current and future-state risks and benefits.
- **Implementation**: Planning and instituting a social media governance framework.
- **Integration and monitoring**: Enabling organization-wide adoption and conducting regular audits and checks to monitor social performance.
The Social Media Three-step Assessment Stage

The journey begins by answering a fundamental question concerning the business criticality of social to the enterprise. While nearly every organization is jumping on the social bandwagon, enterprises need to assess the degree to which they need to make social core to the business. To do this, they need to evaluate the business model, market dynamics, competitive landscape, customer base and global scale necessary to succeed with social. Such an assessment will help decision-makers define the goalposts and articulate the end objectives of their social media transformation program.

However, before embarking on this journey, the organization must assess its existing social media maturity. Maturity can be determined using a six-level framework (see Figure 1).

Social Media Maturity Levels Across Organizations


Figure 1
In our experience, most organizations have crossed the preparation stage, and many are in the engagement and formalized stages, wherein social media is integrated with the marketing function and the company is seeking to develop a formal governance framework to scale its social efforts. However, some companies have risen to the strategic and converged stages, wherein social is integrated with sales and finance and is driving business transformation.

We use four lenses to complete a true assessment of social media maturity (see Figure 2) and suggest that enterprises apply similar due diligence when gauging their own maturity level.

**People View**
A people-centric view focuses on the level of employee involvement and engagement on corporate social media profiles. Depending on the enterprise's social media maturity level, employees could be bystanders who are simply following their company's channels, or they could be infrequent participants who limit their involvement to certain topics. Engaged employees actively share organizational messages across their networks, while champions leverage social media to advance business objectives (see Figure 3, next page).

**Tools & Platform View**
From a tools and platforms perspective, one indication of maturity is whether the enterprise is using simple social publishing and reporting tools or is applying advanced social media analytics and social commerce tools to drive revenue. The presence of these tools should then be matched with the level of use by various organizational functions. The integration of these social tools with other existing systems, such as the content management system (CMS), security systems and CRM systems, should also be evaluated.
People View

Bystanders
Follow company social channels without any involvement.

Participants
Contribute infrequently and limit their involvement to certain topics of relevance to them.

Engaged
Effectively contribute to organizational promotions/communications and sharing it within their network.

Champions
Leverage social media to derive business objectives and results for specific business requirements and organizational goals.

Organizational View
The organizational view offers a glimpse into how effectively the enterprise is leveraging social media across various business functions (see Figure 4, next page). An example is the adoption of innovative models of social commerce, such as using a social messaging app like WeChat to send customers discount coupons redeemable at local vending machines. It’s a classic example of online-to-offline sales integration via a social platform.

Media View
The media view should span paid, owned and earned media to gauge the consistency of the licensed content flowing across the organization and the adherence to brand guidelines in curated and user-generated content. The overall enterprise presence throughout brand Web sites, blogs, social channels, microsites and forums also needs to be evaluated. Other critical factors that can help with assessing social media maturity include the presence of mature workflow management processes for real-time collaboration on content creation, and checks for content publishing by authorized stakeholders.

Both qualitative and quantitative measures must be combined to gain the valuable inputs necessary for customizing the social media governance framework (see Figure 5, page 8). Qualitative parameters have been the initial focus; one way to measure the quantitative aspects is to prepare a benchmark Likert scale (a psychometric scale commonly involved in research) and rate the organization according to adherence to best practices and adoption levels.

Figure 3
Organizational View

HUMAN RESOURCES
• Talent acquisition: Is HR able to source candidates through social media?
• Employer branding: Is the organization leveraging forums like Glassdoor and LinkedIn to build a strong employer brand?
• Alumni advocacy: Are alumni being engaged via social media channels?

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
• Product design: Are product ideas being crowdsourced via social media?
• Product innovation: Are end users being tapped for product innovation and co-creation?

CUSTOMER INSIGHTS
• Purchase behavior: Is social media analytics being applied to map out the purchase behavior of specific customer segments?
• 360-degree view of customers: Is social media data being used to create a holistic view of the customer?

MARKETING
• Customer acquisition & engagement: Are social media efforts leading to a rise in customer acquisition?
• Brand loyalty & customer advocacy: Is social media marketing leading to higher brand loyalty and creating brand advocates?

SALES
• Social selling: Is the sales team adopting social selling techniques?
• Social & m-commerce: Are innovative models of social selling on mobile devices being leveraged?

LEGAL
• IPR protection: Is the company trademark/IP protected on social media?
• Online reputation management: Are regulatory issues being addressed on social media in real-time?

The assessment stage should also include identification of the risks and benefits of embarking on a journey to become a true social media-centric enterprise (see Figure 6, page 9). Risks include damage to brand reputation by customers, defamation by employees and competitors, noncompliance with legal and regulatory issues, misinformation, misuse of IPR/trademark and leakage of classified data.

Implementation Stage
After assessing the current social media maturity level of the enterprise and defining the end-state objective, organizations need to establish an implementation roadmap. The most critical piece is establishing the right social media governance framework to guide and enforce the necessary workflows and processes.
Social media governance stretches beyond compliance, crisis management and maintaining brand integrity across social channels, to ensuring that the brand is portrayed in the right way across all social touchpoints, and that the organization can leverage social media to increase the productivity and efficiency of its key business functions.

Social Media Governance Framework

A sound social media governance framework is based on six key focus areas (see Figure 7, page 10). These areas must be viewed as the overarching mechanism that guides social media monitoring, analysis, reporting and publishing.

- **Enterprise social strategy:** The organization’s social strategy needs to define the level of social media integration and adoption across various business functions. The vision — which is defined by the level of social media maturity — must be translated into an action plan for all departments. The action plan must then be implemented by functional leads that set social key result areas (KRAs) for their respective teams (e.g., the number of employees hired via social recruitment). The strategy should be created after assessing the brand’s need and the digital awareness of the customer base. Doing so helps to identify the number of social channels and accounts that should be maintained. Best practices and guidelines for core processes of social media operations, such as content management, must be established to drive needed organizational synergies.

- **Governance team and organizational structure:** An executive review committee comprised of cross-functional domain experts needs to be formed. The key task of this committee is to monitor the progress of the social media program and suggest changes in line with the evolving social landscape. These changes must be made in the backdrop of an ongoing social environmental scan that reveals enterprise opportunities and challenges (e.g., irrelevant social accounts and the need for new networks). An online reputation management and crisis team also needs to be set up, with clear decision-making mechanism to act in case of a social crisis.

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<td>No clear social media workflows and social media technology platforms.</td>
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<td>Partially defined social media workflows, somewhat enabled by technology platforms.</td>
<td>Fully defined social media workflows partially enabled by technology platforms.</td>
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Figure 5
• **Technology and processes:** A scalable, reliable, integrated social media management system must be developed to meet the move-forward technological needs of the social media program. It should support real-time collaboration among all departments and across all locations, and enable them to contribute toward the program objective. The social media management system should include SOC1TYPE1 and SOC1TYPE2 certifications. SOC1TYPE1 means the vendor has developed the necessary operations policies and processes and that they have been audited and approved by a third party, while SOC1TYPE2 means that the vendor is protected against unauthorized access, and the stored information and customer data is also protected. The technology platform needs to be augmented with the right processes, protocols and workflows for social media communication and crisis management, including stage gates, access rights and approvals.

• **Audit and reporting:** Organizations should conduct regular audits, with periodic reports on the state of the social governance program. The audit needs to highlight the social governance index, response preparedness to online crisis, and the impact of the social program on organizational productivity and output. The executive review committee would then review the findings, institute the necessary changes to the program and revise the internal and external guidelines on social media. Audits should also review security threats, password management and stakeholder rights of social media accounts. Social listening would reveal information about conversations around classified or restricted information on financials, trade secrets and any other sensitive materials.

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**Risks on the Journey to becoming a Social Media-centric Organization**

**MISINFORMATION**
- Misleading information or incorrect facts being broadcast on digital media.
- For example, creation of fake profiles of senior figures and fake company pages by miscreants.

**LEGAL, REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE ISSUES**
- Nonconformance with laws and regulations in digital mentions of the brand.
- Violation of ethical standards, prescribed practices, internal policies and procedures on social media by members of the organization.

**SECURITY THREATS**
- Media leakage of intellectual property/confidential organization data on social media platforms.
- Threats to the security of the company or brand identified on social media.

**REPUTATIONAL RISK**
- Defamation of company/brand on social media by:
  > Customers
  > Employees
  > Competitors

[Figure 6]
Social media governance stretches beyond compliance, crisis management and maintaining brand integrity across social channels, to ensuring that the brand is portrayed in the right way across all social touchpoints, and that the organization can leverage social media to increase the productivity and efficiency of its key business functions.

### Enterprise Social Strategy
- Assess the number of social channels and accounts required as per the brand’s need and level of investment.
- Define organizational strategy for adoption of social media by core functions (HR, sales, marketing, product design).
- Establish best practices for content management (reuse, templatization, storage, archived campaigns) across social channels.

### Governance Team & Org Structure
- Establish an executive review committee with cross-functional domain experts for program governance.
- Form a crisis management team with a clear decision-making mechanism via defined roles and responsibilities.
- Analyze governance program effectiveness and make changes in line with changing social environment.

### Audit & Reporting
- Periodically report to executive review committee on Social Governance Index.
- Review and revise internal and external social media guidelines.
- Conduct regular audits and research of the social environment to identify potential opportunities and challenges.

### Technology & Processes
- Define formal workflows from trigger to execution for social media communication, including approvals and stage gates.
- Establish protocols and procedures for online crisis management and response SOPs.
- Implement an integrated social media management system that has a SOC1TYPE1 or SOC1TYPE2 certification.

### Social Business Ethics
- Outline the principles for the brand’s online business persona.
- Articulate the brand’s digital code of conduct (channel use, KPIs, preferred publishers, etc.).
- Define the brand’s social experience, short and long term.
- Create social media guidelines for employees.

### Compliance & Risk
- Ensure compliance with consumer protection laws.
- Create policies to ensure customer privacy and security of PII information.
- Ensure adherence to Web policies for data storage.
- Create policies and procedures for employees on use of social media for work related activities.
• **Compliance and risk:** The most important stakeholders in the successful implementation of a sound social media governance framework are the employees. Employee policies and processes should be disseminated not only via employee handbooks and social media guidelines, but also through workshops and training. Customers who interact with the brand on social channels are also on the center stage of social governance. The framework should include a documented process for identifying personally identifiable information (PII), as defined by law. A privacy policy should be drafted that governs any social media initiative that requests or tracks information such as names, e-mail IDs, addresses and credit card details. The company should certify adherence to standard privacy policies established by guidelines such as the EU and the U.S. Safe Harbor Privacy Standard.

• **Social business ethics:** A digital code of conduct needs to be established that spans all social media network activities. This digital code of conduct needs to align with the principles on which the brand’s online business persona operates, and should feed into the company’s employee social media guidelines. It should clearly articulate unacceptable activities that violate the organization’s code of ethics. Adequate measures must be implemented to check infringement of the stated principles in the digital code, and corrective actions must be in place to punish offenders. The executive review committee should update the company’s digital code of conduct on a regular basis, while creating a short- and long-term vision of the brand’s social experience.

**Integration & Monitoring Stage**

From here, the organization must percolate the defined social media governance framework and the six focus areas across the organizational ecosystem, along with the necessary checks and systems for periodic monitoring. Formulating clear guidelines on social media usage by employees and setting up information flow processes with rights management can be equated to building an amusement park with all its rides and games. The tougher part is ensuring that the audience embraces the park, uses the rides, and enjoys and shares the experience with the rest of the world.

The audience in today’s workplace represents varying age groups, cultures and nationalities. The enterprise must instill a culture of social centricity and motivate heterogeneous employees to adopt social media in the pursuit of their personal and team goals. A fine balance must be maintained between social media governance controls and employees’ inherent desire for autonomy. This can be addressed by building in a certain degree of flexibility into the social governance model and ensuring a robust system-driven alert mechanism to flag deviations.

**Enterprise-wide Implementation**

It is important to understand the audience from both an employee and customer standpoint and then tailor the messaging for inculcating a social media-centric approach. Today’s workforce comprises a diverse mix of professionals, with varying degrees of digital and social media maturity. Many older-generation employees can be categorized as “social naives” who are neither dependent on nor curious about social networks. This group must be motivated and trained on the use of social channels and how social can be leveraged to drive business objectives. This might
entail the creation of simple user guides on how to set up a Twitter account or Instagram profile. A concerted effort is needed to move this group from bystander to social champion status.

Meanwhile, the millennial generation (social natives), is hyper-connected on all social channels and relies on social media to complete tasks, share updates and connect with friends anywhere, anytime and on any device. An alternate approach is required to encourage this group to adhere to the social media program, as they cannot feel stifled by the social media guidelines and do's and don’ts. The governance model should facilitate adequate checks and balances to flag deviations, while also allowing social natives to innovatively drive social initiatives that contribute to business benefits.

It takes time to build an end-to-end social media-centric enterprise; it also takes time for the governance framework that forms the bedrock of this evolution to impact the organization. The framework should not be forced on employees; rather, they should be gradually brought into the fold. By building flexibility into the social governance framework, organizations can help employees become more involved. It’s also important for the entire organization to speak in one unified tone to create a consistent, compelling social experience for both customers and business partners.

Organizations that apply sound governance can achieve numerous benefits from becoming social media-centric enterprises (see Figure 8). The first is related to preemptive identification and real-time mitigation of potential risks that could
impact the corporate brand and organizational security. Second is overall business efficiency, which leads to higher organizational productivity and provides competitive advantage. Undoubtedly, marketing receives the greatest benefits from solid social media governance, as measured by its contribution to higher rates of customer acquisition, engagement, loyalty and advocacy. Lastly, costs can be rationalized through activities such as content repurposing and recruitment via social channels.

**Periodic Monitoring & Reporting**

The leading indicators that a company is becoming a truly social media-centric organization are a successful social media governance framework and active employee participation. To ensure continued success, organizations need to conduct periodic monitoring and reporting, including the following:

- **A compliance audit:** Such an audit should provide detailed information on the trigger workflows, compliance breach SOPs, response protocols and stakeholder alerts, enabled by the social media management platform and reviewed by the executive review committee. The audit should cover any kind of adverse event, fraud and misinformation that can potentially happen on social media.

- **A brand report:** Brand reports should be published on a regular basis and cover the overall assessment of a brand's reputation on all social channels. The report needs to assess the brand from multiple dimensions, including competition and customers, as well as a regulatory and industry perspective. A qualitative summary of the brand's overall social presence should be presented for executive review.

- **A social listening report:** Social listening is an ongoing activity that should be conducted using the social media technology platform. Sentiment analysis is a critical aspect of this report, which should reveal insights such as the root cause of negative social sentiment. The report should also capture response mechanisms, such as campaigns to counter negative sentiment.

- **An assessment of online reputation management (ORM):** An ORM audit is key to ensuring the resiliency of the social program to online crisis and its ability to predict and manage issues that could potentially grow into a full-blown crisis. The audit should cover the entire ecosystem of the organization's marketing and advertising agencies, PR teams and digital marketing teams, and assess their effectiveness in predicting and responding to issues that could damage brand reputation.

**Moving Forward**

In today's digital world, an organization that scales the summit of a truly social business enterprise ensures a huge competitive advantage. To get there, organizations must accurately assess their current social media maturity and accelerate social media centricity by addressing the following pertinent questions:

- What is the desirable state of social integration, given the organization's specific business model, customer base and competitive landscape?
- In the rapidly evolving social media ecosystem, where should the enterprise invest its time and effort to create compelling experiences for internal and external stakeholders?
- Is the social governance framework comprehensive enough to facilitate meaningful customer engagements while ensuring adequate checks and balances to identify and mitigate potential online crises?
• What are some innovative ways that a heterogeneous employee base can be rallied toward the common goal of social media centricity, while factoring in their varying degrees of digital and social maturity?

• Are robust monitoring and audit mechanisms in place to ensure that the social program maintains momentum and the organization keeps pace with the rapidly changing social media ecosystem?

With these questions resolved, the enterprise can push forward from any point in its social media evolution to channel best practices and processes to its advantage.

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**About the Author**

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